



100 years



MILITARY MEDICAL MISSIONS

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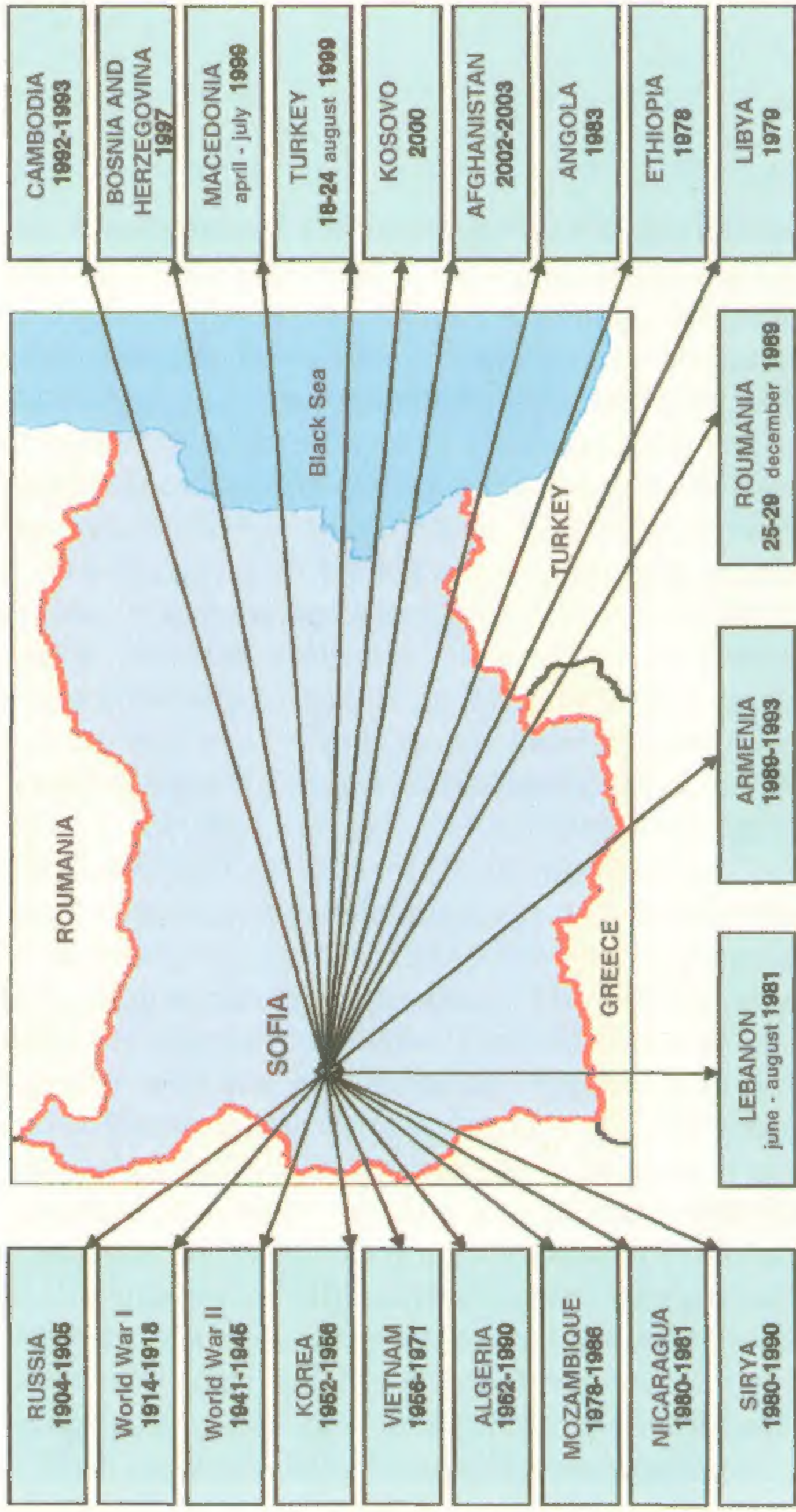
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PREFACE

One of the basic tasks of the Republic of Bulgaria's military forces at the turn of the 20th century, is the preparation and conduct of humanitarian operations. Hence studying the practical experience, Bulgaria has gained in organising humanitarian operations in the 20th century, allows us to face this new challenge.

Humanity presupposes respecting human dignity and justice, and defying the humiliation of mankind. It is patience and tolerance in human relationships that ensure harmony, peace and understanding among peoples. The international organisations, and above all the UN and the Security Council after 1948, are called upon to settle problems and restore tolerance. At present the armed forces are used to maintain peace and stability, defend the population, protect and rehabilitate the environment, offset the consequences of natural disasters and industrial accidents. Hence, at the turn of the 20th century, the interaction between the Bulgarian army and civil institutions was intensified, the international military co-operation and our participation in missions abroad is becoming more active. Humanitarian operations are an integral part of peacekeeping operations. They aim at providing assistance to the affected population; they either precede or take place together with the humanitarian actions, held by civil organisations. Humanitarian aid includes the supply of basic means for the survival of the population exposed to risks, such as food, shelter, medical provision etc. The aim of the humanitarian peacekeeping operations is to carry out lifesaving in stricken areas, improve the quality of life, relieve pain, reconstruct the infrastructure, etc. Such operations are undertaken upon the request of local services, foreign and international organisations, prior to or following natural disasters or human actions, resulting in disasters. Each successive mission enriches the experience of the

Bulgarian army and builds up its capacity to participate in operations, other than war. To fulfil their mission successfully, the soldiers from the Bulgarian army have to take the decisive step from their traditional role of warriors to their new role of peace-makers.

Being an integral part of the Bulgarian army since its establishment at the end of the 19th century, the Bulgarian military medical men perform their duties guided by humanitarian principles. This approach is determined not only by virtue of their profession, but also by the fact that, together with their colleagues from public health care, they are in the vanguard of the Bulgarian nation.

The participation in all humanitarian missions, organised by Bulgarian governmental and non-governmental organisations during the 20th century, is indisputable evidence of the humanity of the Bulgarian military medical men.

The present historical review is devoted to this participation.

DEVELOPMENT OF THE MILITARY MEDICAL SERVICE IN BULGARIA

Immediately after the end of the Russian-Turkish liberation war (1877-1878) one of the basic tasks of the Russian civil administration was to organise a regular Bulgarian army. A Bulgarian municipal army was established (1878), comprising 31 000 people, distributed in battalions of 1000 people (in provinces and counties). The medical logistic support of the army was assigned to a special military medical unit.

The beginning of the military medical service in Bulgaria can be dated to August 17th, 1878, when Konstantin Bonev, MD, (1848-1882) was appointed head of the newly-created military medical unit. He was „the senior physician of the Bulgarian volunteer corps – a court advisor“. At the same time the first six provincial medical doctors were appointed, and under their guidance military infirmaries with 50 beds were organised in each military province. In each unit there were military infirmaries with 28 beds. In the district and county towns, where civil hospitals had already been set up, military infirmaries with 28 additional beds each were opened to meet the needs of the army. The state covered all expenditures for the medical treatment of the personnel with military ranks.

In April 1881 the Russian military MD Ivan Vassilevich Grimm came to Bulgaria to „organise civil and military medical service in the country“ and he performed the function of general-inspector, in charge of the medical service in Bulgaria. The idea to establish an independent military medical service in Bulgaria came to the fore. „The provisions for the medical and veterinary service in the army“ (the rules and regulations), published in 1882 established the new institution of the military medical service and the brigade medical doctor.

After the war between Serbia and Bulgaria of 1885, the

Bulgarian army was constantly being reorganised. Different ways to optimise medical logistic support were being considered. To this effect a new committee at the Ministry of Defence was established in 1887. Its major tasks were to provide peacetime and wartime sanitary staff for the army, prepare regulations for its activity, and state its considerations for organising the military schools in accordance with the peacetime and wartime organisation of the army. As a result a Military Sanitary Council at the Ministry of Defence was established in 1889. The first general garrison hospitals, as independent military medical institutions, were opened in the country.

Under order No.439 of the Minister of Defence issued on November 9th, 1891, that came into effect on December 1st, 1891, the General Garrison Hospital in Sofia was set up. It was the third established general garrison hospital in the country after those in Plovdiv and Shoumen, established in 1890. By order 436, issued on November 5th, 1891 Gueorgi Zolotovitch (MD at the Military School) was appointed head of the Garrison hospital in Sofia and medical doctor Ivanov - his deputy.



General Army Military Hospital in Sofia

On January 1st, 1893 the General Garrison hospital in Sofia was renamed First Divisional Hospital in Sofia; it had 100 beds for soldiers and 10 beds for officers available. It functioned up to the end of 1918. Sanitary major Luidji Pontara, of Austrian origin, was appointed head of the newly set-up hospital.

The article „A few words on our military hospitals“ by the sanitary major Ignat Barbar, published in 1893, was one of the first documents, which helps us estimate the initial stages of the development of the military medical aid in our country. It treats important issues, related to the opening and functioning of these new military medical institutions, such as their housing in appropriate buildings, the necessary rules and regulations governing their internal organisation, the periods for medical treatment, the establishment of medical libraries, the supply of disinfecting apparatuses in each hospital etc. In his article Barbar, MD, recommends that the divisional hospital be „a model in any respect“. The perfect implementation of all assigned tasks has been a recurring idea throughout the hospital's history. The people, who have contributed to making the idea come true are the military ranks working there, and the heads at the initial stage of its development – the Renaissance medical doctors and sanitary officers L. Pontara, J. Lyubenov. P. Dimitrov, D. Kiranov, I. Batzarov, T. Iliev, T. Popov.

In accordance with the „Regulations for the sanitary service in the army in peacetime“ (1900), the number of beds in the divisional hospital was increased, and as a result First Divisional Hospital in Sofia already had 200 beds available. One of the military hospitals' basic missions was formulated then: to take care of the military men's health in peacetime and wartime conditions. It was during this period that the Bulgarian military medical men for the first time took part in a humanitarian mission under the guidance of D. Kiranov, MD in the Russian-Japanese war.

During the Balkan War of 1912-1913, First divisional hospital in Sofia functioned as a branch of the Distribution hospital

in Sofia. It included 18 medical doctors, 8 undergraduate students of medicine, 57 hospital nurses. During the war the Austrian sanitary mission, the aim of which was to help the Bulgarian military hospital by providing medical doctors and nurses, was housed in the new premises of Sofia First divisional hospital. At that time Assen Petrov, MD, one of the founders of contemporary medical science in Bulgaria, was head of the hospital.

After World War I was declared, the hospital's entire personnel took part in servicing the army's troops. During World War I head of the 6th local military hospital in Sofia (situated in the premises of Sofia First divisional hospital) was Ivan Karamihaylov, MD. The Austrian sanitary mission, which had arrived again in 1915, supplied the military hospital with consumables and materials, tools, sterilisation equipment, X-rays, water beds, electromechanical apparatuses, which upgraded the quality of medical care.

After the end of the war, in compliance with the structure of



Providing help to the wounded during World War I

the army in peacetime (1919), divisional hospitals were set up as follows:

- General army military (and divisional) hospital in Sofia;
- First-rate military hospitals with sanatoria for disabled people with 20 beds available;
- Second-rate military hospitals with sanatoria for disabled people;
- Garrison hospitals.

After the new peacetime staff became effective, Racho Angelov, MD, division doctor of First Sofia infantry division, was appointed head of the general army military hospital.

In 1919 Racho Angelov, MD, together with the Public Health care director, Ivan Kessyakov, MD, and the deputy head of the military-sanitary unit in the army lieutenant-colonel Todor Popov, MD, participated in drawing up a project for the temporary utilisation of the state hospital institutions, including the general army military hospital, to meet the needs of the Medical Faculty in Sofia. To meet the demands of the army's sanitary service, a training school for sanitary sergeants at the General Army Military Hospital was opened on the July 1st, 1930.

In the early 1930's the military medical doctors in our country, and those from the General Army Military Hospital in particular, focused their attention on the problems, concerning the army's peacetime morbidity rate. It was in 1932 that the first categorisation of the occupational diseases in the army was made.

In accordance with the army's and military institutions' peacetime staff, the following military medical institutions were established in 1938: an all-army hospital with a subordinate to the military-sanitary unit training school for sanitary sergeants; two first-rate divisional hospitals in Plovdiv and Shoumen, five second-rate military divisional hospitals in Sliven, Rousse, Vratza, Dupnitsa and Haskovo, and a Garrison medical public health station in Pleven.

During the first period of World War II no significant changes were effected in the all-army hospital. From the

personnel of the latter, a Third Army Surgical Hospital was set up to meet the frontal needs; its head was lieutenant-colonel Matei Ivanov, MD. During the second period of the war two more surgical hospitals – First Army Surgical Hospital in Sigetvar, Hungary with head second-lieutenant Luchezar Gyulemetov, MD, and Second Army Surgical Hospital in Mohach, Hungary with head second-lieutenant Ivan Karamihaylov, MD, grew out of the all-army hospital. After the end of the war and the First Bulgarian Army's demobilisation, from April 1945, colonel Vesselin Nikolov, MD, was appointed head of the hospital.

In 1946 a new medical institution for military ranks was established in Sofia. The latter was an all-army polyclinic with head colonel Rayko Radevsky, MD.

Initially the polyclinic was an independent hospital. Since July 1950 the hospital and polyclinic were united into an all-army hospital with a polyclinic.

In 1954 a Central Research Military Medical Institute was established (on the basis of the existing since 1945 All-Army Hygiene Institute in Ovcha Kupel). As a specialised institute at the Bulgarian army, it was assigned the functions to develop the different aspects of the medical protection of the army and the population.

On August 12th, 1960 by government decree No. 196, the Higher Military Medical Institute (HMMI) was established, which included the Central Research Military Medical Institute in Ovcha Kupel (Sofia), the all-army hospital (Sofia), and the department for military medical training at the medical department at the Ministry of Defence.

Together with the medical diagnostic activity, HMMI's structure provided better opportunities for raising the qualification of the medical officers in the military medical specialities and training the medical staff to meet the army's needs; it also provided for research, related to the peacetime and wartime medical provision of the army.

In the period 1960 – 1988, heads of HMMI were major-

general professor Gencho Krastinov, MD, major-general academician Atanass Maleev, MD, major-general associate professor Ivan Hariev, MD, major-general Vassil Gerganov, MD, major-general professor Nikolay Kuppenov, MD.

At the establishment of the HMMI in 1960 and the construction of the new premises in 1980, a lot of structural changes and improvements in the military healthcare took effect; these raised the level of HMMI, and it became one of the most prestigious medical institutions in the country.

Decree No. 546 of April 7th 1989, by which a Military Medical Academy was established at the Ministry of Defence, was indicative of the reputation and acknowledgement of HMMI's activities. The newly established academy was a unified medical, training and research institute, the task of which was to promote military medicine and offer training, specialisation and qualification for the military medical staff. The Academy's



Military Medical Academy in Sofia

constituent units then were: HMML, the Hospital for Government Officials, the Military Naval Hospital in Varna and the United Air Force Medical Research Institute in Sofia. Thus the Academy combined medical service, research and training, dealing not only with problems of the land forces, but also those of the air and naval forces.

In the period 1988 - 2003 heads of the Military Medical Academy were the following people: major general corresponding member professor Yovcho Topalov, MD, Major General corresponding member professor Grigor Mechkov, MD, Major General Nikola Alexandrov, MD, colonel professor M. Petrov, MD, Brigadier General associate professor Roumen Zlatev, MD. Head of the Military Medical Academy today is Brigadier General associate professor Stoyan Tonev, MD.

Together with the basic changes in our society, the Military



Dislocation of the Military Medical Academy structural units

Medical Academy was also being restructured to comply with world and NATO standards. Today it unites another four medical centres for active medical treatment in Plovdiv, Varna, Pleven, Sliven, three rehabilitation centres in Bankya, Hissar and Pomorie, and the Centre for Military medical specialists' report and aviation medical help, the research institute for radiobiological, biological and chemical protection, the Centre for military epidemiology and hygiene in Sofia, with branches in Plovdiv, Sliven and Varna.

Throughout its history and since its establishment, the Military medical service has not only dealt in issues concerning its improvement, but has also taken part in humanitarian missions, organised by the Ministry of Defence, Ministry of Healthcare, and the Bulgarian Red Cross.

HUMANITARIAN MISSION DURING THE RUSSIAN-JAPANESE WAR

At the beginning of 1904 USA's, Russia's, Japan's and Germany's conflicting geopolitical interests in Manchuria deepened the contradictions between them. Japan put forth a condition, unacceptable for the Russian government, to admit its dominating role not only in Manchuria, but in Korea as well. In the night of February 8th Japan started military actions without declaring war. Its navy suddenly attacked a Russian squadron that had cast anchor in Port Arthur. The Russian-Japanese war began.

The first humanitarian mission in the history of Bulgarian healthcare was the medical brigade sent to the Far East (Manchuria) to help the Russian Red Cross Society during the war. Taking into consideration the capacities of liberated Bulgaria, which was just beginning to resurrect from the ruins, and those of the Bulgarian Red Cross, the assistance provided was modest, yet cordial.

In April 1904 the leaders of the Russian Red Cross Society decided to take advantage of the help Bulgaria offered. The supreme administration of the Bulgarian Red Cross, represented by Ivan Evstatiev Geshov, started organising a medical brigade. The military medical staff was selected with no hesitation, and lieutenant colonel Dimitar Kiranov, MD, was appointed leader of the brigade. He was then head of Sofia First Divisional Hospital, successor of which is the Military Medical Academy. The brigade included: first lieutenant Mendizov, MD, the medical nurses – Zapolska and Ingilizova (alumnae of the school for medical nurses at the Bulgarian Red Cross) and the medical auxiliaries Angel Markov and Stoyan Dimov. The brigade had medical equipment available to open a hospital with 30 beds,

packed in two freight cars. The medical brigade was staffed, equipped and financially supported by the Supreme administration of the Bulgarian Red Cross.

On May 8th, 1904 the brigade, in full strength, left for Varna. After a short stay the equipment was loaded on the „Nadezhda“ ship, which started off for Odessa on May 10th, 1904 and arrived there on May 11th.

After a four-day visit, on May 15th, the Bulgarian Medical brigade was given an official salute as it was seen off to the Far East, and it arrived in the town of Harbin (Manchuria), following a previously chosen route, on July 4th, 1904. Lieutenant-colonel Dimitar Kiranov, MD gave a detailed account of the voyage from Odessa to Harbin in his report „On my trip to the Far East“. It became clear that the freight cars with the medical equipment would arrive a couple of days after the personnel of the brigade, and would be accompanied by the medical auxiliary Markov.



*Hospital of the Bulgarian Red Cross Society in Gundjulin
1903–1905*

The premises provided for opening a hospital needed repair. While the repair works were under way, the brigade opened a refreshment stand at the train station, which was visited by 575 wounded and ill Russian soldiers.

The sanitary-hygienic conditions the hospital provided were up to the standard of the time. The Russian sanitary units, which visited the hospital, pointed out that it was well equipped; it had its own sterilising equipment, a large quantity of dressing consumables and other necessary tools and instruments available.

The first wounded were hospitalised on July 19th, 1904. The more intensive the military actions, the higher the number of wounded, the greater the need for beds. Mr. Mihaylov, major commissioner of the Russian Red Cross Society, suggested increasing the capacity of the hospital with 60 beds. To this effect the Russian party granted 30 beds with the necessary equipment, a medical nurse – the Russian Lyudmila Yanushka and six Russian hospital attendants.

At its very opening the hospital started work at full capacity. When the number of beds increased from 30 to 60, Kiranov, MD, raised the question of extra equipment and personnel. On August 4th, 1904 the military doctors major Todor Iliev, MD, and second lieutenant Vassilev, MD, who stayed until the end of the mission, arrived. Later lieutenant colonel Kiranov, MD came back to Bulgaria together with first lieutenant Mendizov, MD. The experience D. Kiranov, MD, gained in the course of the mission, helped him perform his functions as head of the Bulgarian Army Sanitary Supervision. Upon his return, Todor Iliev, MD became head of Sofia First divisional hospital (1907-1914).

Due to the Russian army's retreat at the beginning of May 1905, the medical institutions changed their location. After the evacuation of the wounded and ill, on March 11th the entire equipment of the hospital was moved out. Later a hospital was

opened in the town of Verkhnyodinsk, a district centre, situated at the foot of the Yablonovy Mountains. In this period not only the wounded and ill Russian soldiers were provided with medical treatment at the hospital. A free clinic for the local people was also opened; medical doctors conducted medical check-ups there.

During the whole period of its functioning, the Bulgarian hospital provided medical treatment to 601 wounded and ill, the overall time of hospitalisation amounting to 14 838 days. The Bulgarian government spent 157 000 leva on the maintenance of the hospital, and 52 000 of the funds were raised through a subscription of the Slavic charity organisation in Bulgaria.



A medical brigade on its way to Manchuria in 1904

The wounded and ill were offered humanitarian aid in the form of towels, socks, shirts and other, sent by the charity organisation in Bulgaria.

According to the data and statements made by

representatives of the Russian Red Cross Society, by the Russian headquarters and the medical service of the Russian army, the Bulgarian medical brigade performed its function with honour and won respect.

The mission finished with the end of the activity of the Bulgarian hospital on November, 10th, 1905.

THE HUMANITARIAN MISSION DURING WORLD WAR I

When Austro-Hungary declared war on Serbia on July 28th, 1914, for a week almost all great powers in Europe joined in. Immediately after the beginning of the war Bulgaria, Greece, Spain, Portugal, the Netherlands, Sweden, Norway, the USA, and the allies in the Austro-German block – Italy and Romania, declared neutrality.

At that time, when World War I had just broken out, Bulgaria had just suffered its first national catastrophe. In the heat of the political struggles, and after Russia joined in the war, the Slavic Committee in Bulgaria, together with the Bulgarian Red Cross, organised and sent to Russia a Bulgarian medical brigade, which was Bulgaria's second humanitarian medical mission abroad.

The humanitarian aid consisted in opening a hospital with



A medical brigade in Russia at the beginning of World War I in 1914

100 beds, providing the necessary equipment, surgical tools and medical apparatuses, dressing, household linen, etc.

The personnel of the brigade encompassed 10 people: Mircho Morphov, MD, head of the brigade and major surgeon, K. Markov, MD, D. Yanakiev, MD, the medicine undergraduate V. Lyubanov, the medical auxiliaries I. Dimitrov and L. Vlassanov, the medical nurses E. Angelova and E. Fedenheht and two nurses – the wives of the medical doctors Markov and Yanakiev.

On October 24th, 1914, ready, well-staffed and medically well-equipped, the brigade started off for Russia, arriving on January 10th, 1915. The hospital was opened at the Romanovskaya station, near Ekaterinodar, and continued functioning until August 24th, 1916.

Throughout the entire life of the hospital, over 800 wounded were given medical treatment, and over 150 surgeries were performed. Apart from the wounded and ill Russian soldiers, the hospital conducted routine check-ups and over 5000 of the local people were medically treated and given free medication. The



A wounded man on the battlefield

medical doctors from the brigade served also as lecturers in training courses for nurses.

On April 7th, 1916 the supreme administration of the Bulgarian Red Cross received a telegram from the International Red Cross Committee with the following message: „The Bulgarian sanitary mission to Russia, staying in Romanovskaya, is working wonderfully, and will not leave Russia.“ On the other hand, the Russian Red Cross Society also wanted the brigade to stay, since the society's leaders were very pleased with its work.

After Bulgaria began military actions, the Bulgarian troops, advancing toward Nis, took as captives a Russian Red Cross medical brigade, sent to help the Serbian Red Cross. In compliance with the provisions of the Geneva conventions, and as agreed upon by the Bulgarian and Russian Red Cross, an exchange of the two brigades was made, under the supervision of the International Red Cross.

The mission ended on August 25th, 1916, when the Bulgarian brigade left Russia and, via Moscow, Sankt Peterburg, Stockholm and Vienna, returned to Sofia on September 25th, 1916.

The valuable experience, gained through the work of the Bulgarian hospital in Russia, was later used in the organisation and participation of military medical brigades in humanitarian missions abroad.

HUMANITARIAN MISSION DURING WORLD WAR II

World War II broke out on September 1st, 1939, when German troops invaded Poland and France and England declared war on Germany on September 3rd. At the end of November 1939 the US government started supplying arms to France and England.

On September 27th, 1939 a tripartite pact was signed in Berlin between Germany, Italy and Japan. In the autumn of 1940 Hungary and Romania joined it, and on March 1st Bulgaria joined it.

In November 1941 the supreme administration of the Bulgarian Red Cross, represented by professor Orhovatz, MD, started setting up a hospital train, which was to function on the Eastern Front in the interests of the German army.

The train was under the guidance of Stoyan Popstoyanov, a



Departure of the hospital train to the East Front

surgeon specialist. The staff of the train also included: lieutenant-colonel Spas Spassov Razboynikov, MD, Sergei Grancharov, a pharmacist, a senior nurse - Maria Nemantzieva, six medical nurses, six hospital nurses, four people performing the function of a messenger-train supervisor, two hospital attendants and five people – maintenance personnel.

The total personnel of the train was 27 people.



Part of the personnel of the hospital train

On February 23rd, 1942 the hospital train left Sofia to perform its mission. Train master was Atanas Atanasov, MD, a surgeon specialist.

Boyan Karastoichev, MD, the mobilised medical nurses – Stefana Tomassini and Raina Pencheva, hospital attendants and other assistant personnel were additionally included.

In the beginning the train had to serve the South, and later the central sector, of the East Front. In the period 1943-1944 the train had already been used on the complete front; it had to cover



Evacuation of wounded in the hospital train



The Bulgarian hospital train at the station in Minsk

the distance from St. Petersburg to Crimea over and over again.

At that time trainmaster was lieutenant colonel Spas Spassov Razboynikov, MD, and a second doctor was Lyuben Burmov.

The memoirs of the participants in the mission reveal that the hospital train provided services to the German army above all, although there were cases when wounded Russian soldiers were



Helping the wounded get off

medically treated and transported. The personnel helped the local population with food and medicine supplies at each stop along its route, and sometimes the medical doctors provided treatment in the houses of Bulgarian immigrants.

In February 1945 the hospital train suffered a bombing air-raid at the train station at Kotbus, after which it was withdrawn in the region around Leipzig. It was there that it was again hit in a bombing air-raid and closed down. During the two air-raids

there were no casualties among the personnel of the train. In April 1945 the first American army units arrived, which took over the train and used it to their own needs.

Together with the preparation and sending of a hospital train,



A Bulgarian surgery hospital in Legionovo

a surgical hospital was staffed and equipped with 200 beds, which left Sofia in February 1942. The hospital was loaded on 16 freight cars, 11 of which housed the equipment, the remaining 5 accommodated the personnel, totalling 96 people. The train set off to Poland, passing through Yugoslavia and Austria. The hospital was opened in Legionovo, a residential district in Warsaw.

At first head of the hospital was the military medical man captain Ivan Gerdzhikov, MD, and upon his resignation the position was taken by Kozhuharov, MD. From the memoirs of lieutenant colonel Spas Spassov Razboynikov, MD, it becomes clear that the hospital was well-staffed with a team of 16 medical doctors, distributed between two wards. The hospital had two very well-



The personnel of the Bulgarian surgery hospital



Bulgarian medical nurses in the hospital in Legionovo

equipped operating rooms available, a dressing room, an X-ray room with a laboratory for picture development, an X-ray apparatus „Siemens - Kugel“ for the operating room, a room for the patients, and a plaster setting room.

Medical treatment to cases with average severe and light injuries was given at the Bulgarian hospital.

Fire fractures of bones comprised about 30% of the cases for hospitalisation. In the cold winter of 1942 a great number of patients with gangrene frostbite were hospitalised. Cases of lower limb amputation were operated on, since gangrene frostbite cases were widespread. Great attention was paid to rehabilitation exercises. Breathing exercises, talcum powder and glycerine paste massages were regularly conducted. The personnel opened up a workshop for the manufacture of tools and instruments, necessary for mechanical therapy.

As a result of the complicated situation, at the beginning of September the hospital left Legionovo and was set up in the town of Tuln, near Vienna (Austria). The hospital staff provided help not only to the wounded soldiers, but also to the vulnerable social groups of the local community. It was particularly helpful to the casualties of a heavy air-raid bombardment of the town.

The German administration took the leadership of the hospital when Bulgaria declared war on Germany and the personnel continued to perform its functions.

In the middle of April 1945 the hospital was closed, and its personnel was dispersed in different countries in Europe, America and Australia.

This is how the humanitarian medical mission during World War II ended.

HUMANITARIAN MISSION IN KOREA

On June 25th, 1950 the South-Korean army, under the cover of American aviation, invaded the People's Democratic Republic of Korea (PDRK). 14 out of 56 UN member- states participated in the war, supporting South Korea.



In the period October – November 1950 the Soviet Union supplied the People's Army of the PDRK with armaments, ammunition, medicine and food supplies. A lot of Chinese volunteers joined the PDRK army. As a result, at the beginning of 1951 the front was stabilised at the 38th degree of latitude. After a

two-year period of negotiations a cease-fire agreement was signed on July 27th, 1953.

Bulgaria sent two medical brigades to provide assistance to the Korean army medical service in the period 1952-1956.

The Ministry of Public Healthcare and Social Assistance and the Bulgarian Red Cross were in charge of staffing the brigades, and providing medical sanitary equipment; they subsequently attracted experienced military medical specialists.

The first medical brigade worked in the period 1952-1954. Its head was Konstantin Michev, MD, a surgeon, and it included 20 medical doctors among which: six general practitioners, four surgeons, two orthopaedists and one therapist, ophthalmologist, internist, traumatologist, obstetrician, neurologist, a paediatrician surgeon, and a pharmacist.

The second medical brigade worked in the period 1954-1956 under the guidance of professor Gerasim Mitrov, MD, a radiologist. Unlike the first brigade, the second included a larger staff of medical doctors – twenty-eight, distributed according to their specialities as follows: six surgeons, two internists, two radiologists, two ear nose and throat specialists, three general practitioners and a traumatologist, an obstetrician, an orthopaedist, a neurologist, a thoracic surgeon, a paediatrician, a bacteriologist, a dentist, a venereal dermatologist, a psychiatrist and a neurosurgeon. Apart from the doctors a medical nurse and a laboratory assistant were included.

Eminent Bulgarian medical scholars from different spheres participated in the two brigades: professor Dimitar Arnaudov, MD, a paediatric surgeon, professor Gancho Ganev, MD, a neurologist, major-general professor Ivan Kopchev, MD, a traumatologist, professor Dimitar Krastanov, MD, professor Yanaki Holevich, MD, an orthopaedist, Major General professor Guencho Krastinov, MD, a surgeon, colonel professor Lyuben Turturikov, MD, an orthopaedist, colonel professor Andrei Stoychev, MD, colonel associate professor Boncho Dimitrov, MD, an ear nose and throat specialist, and the military medical doctors major Peter Mihaylov

and major M. Petrov.

The personnel of the medical brigade worked in field hospitals,



Bulgarian military medical doctors in Korea

opened in the towns of Sinuiju and Kange respectively. Colonel L. Turturikov's memoirs point out that the base of brigade was situated in the town of Sinuiju. On the basis of the agreement signed between the two countries, the hospital in Sinuiju was both equipped and supplied with consumables and materials by Bulgaria for the treatment of the wounded and ill.

The doctors from the two medical brigades were evenly distributed to work in the two hospitals, and every six months they changed their work places. Not only did they provide medical treatment for the soldiers of the Korean army, but they also helped vulnerable and helpless civilians.

In the 1952-1956 period the surgeons from the two brigades, 16 people in total, performed over 1000 small and major surgical



Bulgarian military medical doctors together with Korean doctors

operations. The surgical operations included 300 skin plastic and reconstructive surgeries, 100 of which were the result of napalm burns, and about 700 appendicostomies. More than 110 wounded with peripheral nerve impairment were treated, about 2000 ophthalmologic check-ups and examinations were conducted.

After bacteriological attacks two infectious diseases wards were opened in the two hospitals. Special mobile anti-epidemic corps, supplied with all necessary materials to fight infectious diseases, were set up.

Apart from the specific medical treatment, a large part of the medical doctors participated in providing methodological help to their Korean colleagues.

While performing his humanitarian duties, Zahary Donchev, MD, died. High government awards were conferred to all participants in the two brigades. A lot of the medical doctors, participants in the medical brigades, later shared their experience on the pages of specialised medical journals: „Military Medical

Treatment“, „Stomatology“, „Surgery“ and others. They participated in two academic conferences, which took place in Phenyang (Korea) in 1953, and Sofia in 1955.

HUMANITARIAN MISSION TO VIETNAM

In December 1946 French troops undertook military actions in Indochina in order to defend their colonial interests. They were



supported by the USA, which supplied them with different armaments.

In the aims of a peaceful settlement in Indochina, negotiations took place in Geneva in the period April 25th - July 21st, 1954, in which the Soviet Union, the USA, France, England and the interested parties participated. The agreement signed resulted in cease-fire in Vietnam, Laos and Cambodia. A demarcation line, south of the 17th degree of latitude, was established in Vietnam. The final statement of the participants, and the proclaimed principles for a peaceful settlement, created the necessary conditions for building and developing the Democratic Republic of Vietnam.

To provide help to the people of Vietnam in the period 1956 -1971, our country sent four medical brigades. The Ministry of Public Health and Social Care was entrusted with providing the necessary staff of medical specialists. It sought co-operation from the Ministry of People's Defence. Thus the medical brigades were staffed with civil and military medical doctors. Heads of the medical brigades were: colonel professor Nikolay Anchev, MD, (1956-1971), professor Boris Barliev, MD (1957-1958), professor Yanto Kaneti, MD (1959-1963), professor Grigor Grigorov, MD (1969 - 1971). The following specialists were included in the medical brigades: a MD at the brigade, six surgeons, two internists, two traumatologists, one ophthalmologist, two radiologists, two pediatricians, a cardiologist, a venereal dermatologist, a laboratory MD, three dentists, two epidemiologists, an ear, nose and throat specialist, two neurologists, two gastroenterologists, one oncology and chemical therapist, and a co-ordinating medical doctor, or 33 people in total.

Members of the mission were the military MDs: colonel professor N. Anchev, MD, colonel, associate professor Nicola Georgiev, MD, colonel Nicola Antonov, MD, Major General professor Nicolay Vassilev, MD, and colonel Spas Bachev, MD.

The medical brigade under the guidance of colonel N.



Bulgarian military medical doctors at a meeting with heads of the medical service of the Vietnamese army



Bulgarian and Vietnamese military medical doctors

Anchev, MD, travelled 19 days and nights by train from Sofia to Hanoi. As associate professor Bozhidar Velikov, MD, points out in his memoirs, the personnel was accommodated in two houses in the outskirts of Hanoi and worked in Military Hospital „108“ and hospital „C“. This brigade was well-staffed with medical doctors – 16 people, two midwives, six medical nurses, an engineer to maintain the medical equipment, an accountant and a cook, which made 27 people in total. Military Hospital „108“ hospitalised wounded soldiers to be completely cured. Throughout their stay, the brigade's medical doctors held training courses for the Vietnamese colleagues. Health lectures were delivered to the patients, and methodological assistance was provided to the Vietnamese military medical service. The Bulgarian dentists played a significant part, since their colleagues working on the territory of Vietnam at this moment, were only eleven, and dental treatment was provided only by dentists (without a university degree).

While doing his highly humane duty, associate professor Andrei Balchev, MD, died, and he was posthumously awarded the golden „Medal of Labour“. The brigade's head, colonel professor N. Anchev, MD, was awarded the same medal. Bozhidar Velikov, MD, and associate professor Penev, MD, and engineer Temelakiev, were awarded silver „Medal of Labour“.

The mission ended in 1971, and we have no data available about the functioning of the remaining three medical brigades.

HUMANITARIAN MISSION TO ALGERIA

After the end of World War II the national liberation movements in Africa assumed a perfectly organised and mass-scale character. Under the pressure of the international community on September 16th, 1959 France developed a plan for the self-governance of the Algerian people. After years-long negotiations, the Evianne agreements were signed on March 19th, 1962. On July 1st, 1962 Algeria's independence was declared.



As a result of the social and political changes, the government of Algeria addressed the Bulgarian government with a request to provide help in building up the Algerian army and its medical service.

The Ministry of Defence organised and sent a couple of medical brigades to assist the medical service of the national liberation army of the Republic of Algeria. The heads of the medical brigades throughout the years were: colonel Alexander Manov,



An Algerian military delegation and the heads of Plovdiv military hospital in 1964

MD, colonel Spas Bachev, MD, colonel associate professor Doncho Donchev, MD and others.

Highly-qualified military medical specialists in: surgery, traumatology, dermato-venerology, ear nose and throat therapy, physiotherapy, anaesthesiology and reanimation, nephrology, gastroenterology and dentistry worked in the Republic of Algeria. There were also lecturers in: organisation and tactics of the

medical service (OTMS), military epidemiology and hygiene, medical protection and military medical provision.

Among them are famous names in the military medical sphere such as: Major General corresponding member professor Grigor Mechkov, MD, Major General professor Stanko Petrov, MD, Major General professor Ivan Kopchev, MD, colonel professor Kancho Kanev, MD, colonel professor Lyubomir



A military medical school in Sidi Bel Abes

Mihaylov, MD, colonel professor Stoyan Gatev, MD, colonel professor Atanas Atanassov, MD, colonel associate professor Boncho Dimitrov, MD, colonel associate professor Toncho Tonchev, MD, colonel associate professor Petar Koynov, MD, colonel associate professor Bozhidar Paliev, MD, colonel associate professor Krassimir Gigov, MD, colonel associate professor Velichko Dragnev, MD.

The medical doctors with clinical specialities, members of the brigades worked in the military hospital in the capital city of Algiers. Prominent among them are the names of colonel professor

Svetoslav Petrovski, MD, colonel associate professor Varban Varbanov, colonel Dimitar Tonev, MD, colonel Milko Adamov,



Papazov, MD, together with Algerian students from the training course for medical doctors

MD, colonel Peter Kolarov, MD and others. They provided the medical treatment and the diagnostics to both the soldiers of the Algerian army and their families.

The medical doctors worked at the Centre for Medical

personnel training at the military hospital in the capital and the military medical school in the city of Sidi Bel Abes.

A course for the training of medical officers to be heads of



Algerian students together with a Bulgarian lecturer

the medical services of brigades and military hospitals took place at the Centre. The training course was of a two-year length, and those that successfully passed the exam were awarded a diploma in OTMS.



Bulgarian military medical doctors with some of the heads of the Algerian army medical service

In the Military Medical School in Sidi Bel Abes, courses for the medical logistic support of the army troops for master sergeants, medical technicians and sanitary instructors were organised. Within a year's period between 1000 and 1500 people were trained. Among the medical doctors - lecturers from the Military Medical Academy were: colonel associate professor Kiril Lyutzkanov, MD, colonel Dechko Papazov, MD, colonel Nikolay Podoleshev, MD, colonel Dimitar Popov, MD, colonel Ivan Georev, MD, lieutenant colonel Stephan Danovski, MD and others.

The mission ended in 1990, but the long-term co-operation between the armies of Algeria and Bulgaria in the sphere of Healthcare has continued since then. In the last years Algerian medical doctors have been trained in Sofia Military Medical Academy to be awarded medical and military medical degrees.

HUMANITARIAN MISSION TO MOZAMBIQUE

The people of Mozambique led a continuous anti-colonial struggle, which intensified in the 1960's. Under the leadership of



the Revolutionary Front for the Liberation of Mozambique (FRELIMO) the patriotic forces took up an armed struggle.

On June 25th, 1975 the country achieved its independence. As of the present day there are only about thirty qualified medical doctors in Mozambique.

To assist the military medical service of the armed forces of Mozambique several military medical brigades, including forty-three medical doctors, were sent there. The mission included medical doctors of the following specialities: neurology, epidemiology, radiology, skin diseases, ophthalmology, urology, internal diseases, traumatology, paediatrics, cardiology, microbiology, dentistry, anaesthesiology, and medical service organisation and tactics.

Members of the various brigades of the mission to Mozambique were medical doctors of the Military Medical



Bulgarian military medical doctors at a parade on the occasion of Mozambique's National Day

Academy, the Medical Agency and the country's military hospitals. Among its members are the following: colonel associate professor Slavcho Slavov, MD, colonel associate professor Ilya Karzhin, MD, colonel associate professor Zachari Tonchev, MD, colonel Stefan Kostadinov, MD, colonel professor Boris Iliev, MD, colonel associate professor Dimitar Dimitrov, MD, colonel associate professor Dimitar Dimov, MD, colonel associate professor Mincho Karkamov, MD, colonel Konstantin Angelov, MD, colonel Petar



Colonel Associate professor Karkamov in front of the hospital in Nampula

Mihaylov, MD, lieutenant colonel Vyacheslav Valchanov, MD, colonel Ivan Kryakov, MD, colonel Todor Petrov, MD, colonel Vassil Manchev, MD, colonel Nikola Ivanov, MD, colonel Razmirov, MD, etc.

The mission's staff was sent to work for the military hospitals in the towns of Maputo, Nampula, and the Medical Office of the Mozambique army. Medical treatment was provided to soldiers from the Mozambique army and the members of their families. A special ward was set up at the Maputo military hospital to attend to the cabinet. In this ward the Bulgarian medical doctors worked together with their Cuban colleagues.

To assist the anti-epidemic activities of the Mozambique army, colonel professor Boris Illiev, MD, developed a „Manual for the hygienic and anti-epidemic provision of the army“. Colonel Konstantin Angelov, MD, held courses on the use of disinfectants in the army.

The mission ended in 1968, and some of its participants left the Bulgarian army to continue their work.

HUMANITARIAN MISSION TO NICARAGUA

On August 27th, 1970 the people of Nicaragua, under the leadership of the Sandinista Front, abolished the dictatorship of the Somossa family, a dictatorship that had lasted for 40 years. After this date the state was started to be established, and general democratic elections were prepared.



To assist the medical service of the Nicaraguan army a Bulgarian military medical brigade, headed by colonel Mihail

Dimov, MD, was sent to Nicaragua in February 1980. The brigade included the following highly-qualified specialists: a surgeon, an ophthalmologist, a gastroenterologist, a neurosurgeon, a traumatologist, a radiologist, a skin venerologist, an ear nose and throat specialist, a MD to co-ordinate the activities, a neurologist, a medical nurse, or 14 people in total.

The following people took part in the mission: colonel associate professor Pavel Guergiev, MD, colonel associate professor Nedelcho Guergelchev, MD, colonel associate professor Stefan Kostadinov, MD, colonel associate professor Tzvetan Panov, MD, colonel associate professor Dotcho Drenski, MD, colonel Hristo Boutsev, MD.

The staff enjoyed a warm welcome by the whole leadership of the Sandinista Front, and was put up at the International hotel in the beginning. Later all members were given individual houses.

The medical doctors of the mission worked in the central military hospital in the capital Managua. A number of surgeries were conducted – neurosurgery, traumatological surgery, surgery of the eye, and other operational interventions were conducted on victims of accidents, above all with firing wounds. A large number of Nicaraguan soldiers were sent to Sofia Military Medical Academy to have reconstructive operations and continuous medical treatment. The brigade's staff serviced the army personnel, war veterans and the members of the accredited embassies in Managua.

Together with the brigade to Nicaragua, an aircraft Il-18, with a 42-ton load of medicines as humanitarian aid to the Nicaraguan people also arrived. The goods were handed over to the Defence minister commandante Ortega by the Bulgarian ambassador to Managua Mr Nikolov in the presence of the brigade's leader. Later as humanitarian aid from Bulgaria a field hospital with all consumables, surgical and tangible equipment with it was granted.

After the situation in the country became normal, the medical doctors of the mission, together with medical treatment, took up training of local MDs in the different branches of the medical



The military medical brigade upon their return from Nicaragua

science. Several Nicaraguan medical doctors were selected in the training process and were sent to Bulgaria for training and specialisation.

At the end of the mission all participants were conferred high government awards by the leadership of Nicaragua's Sandinista Front for the excellent performance of their humane commitment.

The mission ended in March 1981.

HUMANITARIAN MISSION TO SYRIA

Syria achieved its independence as a result of a serious struggle on April 17th, 1946. After the Socialist Party for Arabic Revival (BAAS) took office in February 1966, the country adopted a policy of understanding with all Arab countries, and an end was put to the period of internal conflicts and tension. In the period of establishing a democratic society, the Republic of Syria asked the Republic of Bulgaria for humanitarian aid.



The mission to Syria of 1980 included over 70 highly qualified Bulgarian medical experts, 21 of which were MDs.



The personnel of one of the medical brigades in Syria



Bulgarian military medical doctors at the major rehabilitation centre in Damascus

The leaders of the medical brigade in Syria were the following: colonel Antonov MD, colonel Urumov MD, colonel Petrov MD, colonel Nikolov, MD.

The basic part of the brigade's personnel worked at the Main Centre for Rehabilitation – located at the military hospital „Ahmed Hashish“, where the supreme staff of officers of the Syrian army was given medical treatment. Some military medical doctors also worked there such as colonel Sotir Boyadzhiev, MD, colonel Guergi Shishkov MD, colonel Garkov, MD, colonel Poryazov MD, colonel Plamen Boyadzhiev MD, colonel Lyubekov and other.

Bulgarian medical doctors worked in other military hospitals as follows: „Maze“, „Tishrin“, „Harasta“ and „Tel“ in the capital Damascus, and in the hospitals of other towns such as Latakia, Hamah, Homs. These medical establishments provided services mainly to soldiers of the Syrian army, and members of their families.



A basketball team of disabled, whose members are Syrian soldiers who have been given medical treatment

A two-year course was organised at the Centre for Rehabilitation for training rehabilitators to meet the needs of the Syrian army. Upon its successful completion and passing a final exam, the participants were allocated to positions in different



Syrian students - trainees for rehabilitators

garrisons.

The participation of Bulgarian military medical experts in the mission ended in 1990.

At the end of 2002 representatives of the Ministry of Defence in Syria and the General Headquarters of the Syrian army visited Sofia Military Medical Academy and agreed upon resuming the co-operation in the humanitarian field.

HUMANITARIAN MISSION TO LEBANON

In compliance with a decision of the UN Security Council of January 1st, 1947, the French army had to withdraw from Lebanon and the country achieved its independence. Since 1961 Lebanon has adopted a policy of non-commitment and neutrality. Nevertheless, during the conflicts between the Arab countries and Israel, the country suffered a number of military provocations,



which affected the civilians as well.

In June 1981, to provide humanitarian aid to the civil

casualties, colonel associate professor Pepi Kazandzhiev, MD, and colonel associate professor Hristo Marinov, MD left for Lebanon.



A view of Lebanon



A Swedish military medical doctor providing humanitarian aid

The Bulgarian medical doctors worked as part of the multinational surgical hospital together with colleagues of theirs from France, Sweden, India and Italy.

In the course of three months (June – August) they conducted operational interventions on civil casualties. In the camp hospital in the Bekaa valley they provided immediate assistance to emergency cases, to casualties with gunshot wounds, which were then evacuated to the hospitals in Damascus and Beirut. The Bulgarian military medical doctors conducted operations in all three hospitals and provided methodological assistance in equipping and refurbishing the hospital in the town of Homs.

The mission was completed at the end of August 1981.

HUMANITARIAN MISSION TO ARMENIA

On December 7th, 1988 Armenia suffered an earthquake of a magnitude of 6.9 according to Richter's scale. Within a couple of minutes the country was turned into debris, under which were buried about 25 000 people, and the casualties amounted to 32 000.



Immediately after the earthquake, the Bulgarian Red Cross organised and sent a mission of rescue workers and a group for the medical assistance and technical maintenance of all victims of

the earthquake. Upon the completion of the rescue operations, because of the large number of casualties with spinal cord and brain traumas, a Centre for rehabilitation was established, headed by the International Committee of the Red Cross and the Red Crescent in Geneva.



Dimitrov, MD, amidst the ruins of Brevan

In 1989 colonel Alexander Dimitrov, MD of the Military Medical Academy worked at the Centre for rehabilitation. He had four terms of office (two years), and after then his place was taken by colonel associate professor Guergi Guergiev, MD.

Apart from medical treatment of the patients the Centre for rehabilitation organised and held training courses for the local personnel (medical doctors, nursing staff and rehabilitators) for providing medical care to all casualties, that had suffered earthquakes and other natural disasters.



The rehabilitation centre in Erevan



A commemorative medal „N.I.Pirogov“

At the end of the mission for his extraordinary merits in providing help to casualties colonel Alexander Dimitrov, MD, was awarded an honorary diploma by the International Committee of the Red Cross and the Red Crescent, and the „Pirogov“ medal by



A honorary diploma by the International Committee of the Red Cross

the Executive Committee of USSR's Red Cross and Crescent.
The mission ended in 1993.

HUMANITARIAN MISSION TO ROUMANIA

During the revolutionary democratic transformations in neighbouring Roumania at the end of 1989, upon the request of its government, the Ministry of Healthcare of the Republic of Bulgaria set up a mobile surgical camp hospital with 200 beds to provide humanitarian aid.



The personnel of this hospital (about 80 people) were recruited among medical doctors from the „Pirogov“ Institute and the



Bulgarian military medical doctors in Bucharest (December 1989)

Military Medical Academy. Colonel associate professor Pepi Kazandzhiev, MD was appointed head of the hospital.

Its members included colonel associate professor Geno Kirov, MD, colonel associate professor Borimir Vassilev, MD, colonel Mihail Kerchev, MD, colonel Evgeni Belokonski, MD, colonel Argir Bakalov MD and others.

On December 25th, 1989 the hospital crossed the border check point „Danube bridge“ on its ways to Bucharest. On December 26th it was located in the suburbs of Bucharest, together with a French camp hospital. According to some preliminary information the two camp hospitals were to be opened in the town of Timisoara. After a three-day stay the Roumanian party refused aid, and the two hospitals left the Republic of Roumania.

The Bulgarian surgical camp hospital provided humanitarian aid in the form of medicine and food supplies, medical tools and



Granting humanitarian aid to the Roumanian people

instruments.

The personnel of the **Bulgarian** surgical camp hospital returned to Sofia on December 29th, 1989.

THE BULGARIAN „BLUE HELMETS“ BATTALION TO CAMBODIA

The signing of the peace treaty on October 23rd, 1991 provided for the settlement of the conflict in Cambodia and the establishment of peace after a forty-year war. In February 1992 the United Nations granted the government of the Republic of Bulgaria the opportunity to take part in the peacekeeping



operation to this country.

In implementation of a decision of the National Assembly of April 15th, 1992, a „Blue Helmets“ battalion was set up to take part in the UN peacekeeping mission to Cambodia – UNTAC.

This was the first time a military unit of the Bulgarian army

participated in such a peacekeeping operation under the aegis of the United Nations.

The Ministry of Defence and the General headquarters of the Bulgarian army put forth the issue to have a „Blue Helmets“ battalion set up within a two-month period. This battalion encompassed a personnel of 1025 people, of which: an infantry battalion of 850 people; military police of 11 people, military observers of 16 people and officers of the headquarters of 6 people. Provided with the necessary personnel and equipped with the property, our contingent was to be sent to Cambodia at the beginning of June 1992.

Such an activity was taken up for the first time in the Bulgarian army. The army lacked experience, it did not know well the requirements to be met according to UNTAC's leadership, it was not aware of the geographical characteristics of the region, in which the battalion was to operate. The medical and geographical characteristics, and the instructions of the mission's leaders set before the Bulgarian military medical doctors the task to develop and implement an immunisation program for the protection of the personnel from nine infectious diseases within the extremely short period of 45 days. Upon their suggestion immunisation against the Japanese B type of encephalitis was additionally included in UNTAC's requirements.

The specialised, military and medical training of the participants in the Bulgarian battalion was conducted in the form of lectures on topics carefully selected to meet the mission's objectives. The medical squad's staff attended a training course at the Military Medical Academy in Sofia.

In May 1992 an avant-garde group of forty soldiers, including a medical doctor and medical technician, left for Cambodia with a mission to discharge the vessel with the Bulgarian military instruments and equipment, and secure the conditions for the deployment of the battalion. In the beginning the group was accommodated at the hotel in Phnom Penh, and later in a barracks premises in the suburbs of the capital up to



The construction of the Bulgarian camp in Cambodia



The personnel of the medical squad in front of the premises of the medical centre in Tma Pau

the establishment of the base camp.

In compliance with a decision of the leadership of UNTAC's mission, the Bulgarian battalion was given barracks in the region of Tma Pau for a base camp, some forty km from Phnom Penh. The first company was deployed in Kampong Trai some 190 km away from the base camp, the second company – in Kampong Mea, 140 km from the base camp, the third company remained in the base camp, the fourth company – in Udonk, some 25 km, and the fifth company – in Odong. The first, second and fifth companies were accommodated in tents. In the base camp both companies used wooden houses and separate brick premises. Meals were prepared and consumed in field conditions.

To improve the personnel's living conditions intensive construction was undertaken in the areas, where the companies were deployed in accordance with UNTAC's program developed in advance.

In the course of its implementation at the end of 1992, the



Demirchev, MD, providing medical assistance to a civil Cambodian

staff of the Bulgarian battalion was accommodated in stationary dormitories. Optimal conditions for eating and maintaining personal and collective hygiene were created.

To protect the health of the Bulgarian contingent, a medical squad was established, which as of June 4th, 1992 included: head of the medical service – therapist, head of the battalion's medical centre – a surgeon, two directors of the company's medical unit, who were surgeons, a dentist, a medical technician, four nurses, two sanitary inspectors, a sanitary inspector, fourteen hospital attendants, or 27 people in total.

Six months later, when partial changes were made to the staff of the Bulgarian battalion, the medical squad was also reorganised. There was an increase in the number of medical doctors to nine, among which: an epidemiologist, a psychiatrist, a venereal dermatologist, and two reanimators. Thus each company was provided with a medical doctor. All medical doctors, except the dermatologist, were officers with a regular service in the army.

In the different periods the following people took part in the mission: colonel Doncho Roussevski, MD, colonel Radanov, MD, colonel Mario Kolev, MD, lieutenant colonel Vesselin Demirchev, MD, lieutenant colonel Atanass Radinov, MD, major Krassimir Ivanov, MD, major Roumen Ivanov, MD, major Ilya Tzolov, MD, major Guergi Dimitrov, MD, and others.

To provide for the medical treatment of the Bulgarian battalion in the base camp, a medical centre was set up in a brick barracks premises. After some reconstruction work, the following rooms were separated: a waiting room, a consulting room, a manipulation room, dental cabinet, pharmacy, a hospital and dormitories for the personnel.

Two doctors provided the medical assistance in the base camp – the director of the medical service – a therapist and a surgeon, who examined the out-patients. Three medical nurses worked with them, one of them in charge of the pharmacy stock, a sanitary instructor – commander of the sanitary department, and six hospital attendants. The medical centre had 469 „UAS“ type ambulances



A check-up of Cambodian soldiers

and a hospital with 10 beds available. The remaining medical staff was distributed among the companies, deployed outside the base camp.

For the entire period within which the Bulgarian battalion „Blue Helmets“ operated, the medical service conducted a considerable amount of activities. Only for the period August 7th – August 16th, the number of the recorded medical examinations

was 2650, and the medical manipulations were 1054, and for the entire period June 1992 – August 1993, the recorded medical examinations were 4358.

The Bulgarian soldiers in need of medical treatment, received high-quality medical service in the multi-profile German hospital, opened at the Medical Institute in Phnom Penh. The hospital of the Royal Air Forces of Taiwan in Bangkok was also used, and it had a computer tomograph available. It was there that the three severely wounded during the Amelang Pum Preg incident were given medical treatment. They were evacuated to the Military Medical Academy in Sofia by a specially equipped aeroplane of „Balkan“ Bulgarian Airlines, and were accompanied by colonel associate professor Guergi Kazandzhev MD, colonel associate professor Alexander Petkov, MD, and colonel associate professor Pepi Kazandzhev, MD, colonel associate professor Stefan Lefterov, MD. This was the first strategic medical evacuation carried out by the Bulgarian military medical service.

The medical squad of the Bulgarian battalion visited a number of villages of the Red Khmers and the hospital in Odong on a humanitarian mission – to deliver medical supplies and sanitary materials and consumables.

Having successfully completed its peacekeeping mission to Cambodia, the Bulgarian „Blue Helmets“ battalion returned to the country in August 1993.

HUMANITARIAN MISSIONS TO BOSNIA AND HERZEGOVINA AND KOSOVO

On January 31st, 1946 Bosnia and Herzegovina became an integral part of the Federal People's Republic of Yugoslavia, as an independent state, and Kosovo became an autonomous



region within the Republic of Serbia.

After the social unrest of the 1990's international peacekeeping forces were deployed in these regions.

From June 1997 Bulgaria took part in the peacekeeping



The work premises of the Bulgarian engineer squad in Kosovo

operation in Bosnia and Herzegovina (SFOR), and from February 2000 in Kosovo (KFOR) with military contingents.

During the different periods of these missions, the Bulgarian army participated with different formations (engineering, transport, mechanical) ranging from squad to company.

Depending on their organisation, the medical assistance was provided either by sanitary inspectors, or military medical doctors.

The following people took part in these missions: major Hristo



A medical centre in Bosnia and Herzegovina

Hristov, MD, captain Dionis Ikonov, MD, captain Jordan Jordanov, MD, captain Katchamirski, MD, senior lieutenant Zhivko Kanev, MD, senior lieutenant Petar Tzvetkov, MD.

The basic function of the military medical doctors was to provide medical assistance to the emergency cases, and clinical treatment of the Bulgarian military men.



Military medical doctors from different countries in Kosovo



A camp hospital in Bosnia and Herzegovina

Highly-qualified and specialised medical assistance was provided within the unified system of medical treatment of the missions. Multinational medical formations and camp hospitals (German, Dutch, Russian and others) were used. The two missions were regularly visited by teams of military medical doctors and psychologists from the Centre for Military Psychology and Psycho-preventive activity.

In March 2000 the second in the history of the Bulgarian military medical service strategic evacuation was carried out. From the town of Prizren in Kosovo, in a medical helicopter granted by the German camp hospital, a Bulgarian military man was evacuated to the town of Skopje in Macedonia. From Skopje airport he was transported to the Military Medical Academy in Sofia by reanimobile, attended to by colonel associate professor Ivan Petkov, MD.

The excellent work of the Bulgarian military doctors was acknowledged by their foreign colleagues, who participated in the peacekeeping and peace enforcement operations.

The two missions continue to the present day, the latest rotation in their participants being effected in January 1993.

HUMANITARIAN MISSION TO THE REPUBLIC OF MACEDONIA

As a result of the military action in Kosovo in 1998 and the beginning of 1999, there was a mass-scale influx of refugees to Macedonia. Upon the request of the government of the Republic of Macedonia, the Republic of Bulgaria sent a humanitarian



mission to provide medical assistance and logistic support.

The Ministry of Defence set up a 'Rear and medical logistic force', which included 114 personnel. Its medical part was staffed with the necessary people, and adequately equipped by the Military

Medical Academy. The Ministry of Healthcare provided the medical doctors – paediatricians and gynaecologists. The force left Sofia on April 14, 1999, and started work in the refugee camp, located near the village of Radusha, about forty km north-west of Skopje.



Part of the personnel of the Rear and Medical Assistance and Logistic Support Force

The medical part of the mission was originally headed by colonel Alexander Dimitrov, MD, commander of the military and medical rapid reaction corps at the Military and Medical Academy, and later by colonel Stefan Uzunov, MD. This corps encompassed 69 people and included: twenty-two medical doctors, three pharmacists, a midwife, a medical laboratory specialist, ten medical nurses and thirty-three other ancillary attendants. They were organised as follows: leadership, a psycho-neurological team, a reanimation team, a therapeutic team, a surgical team, and infectious

and epidemical team, and two paediatric teams. Because of the large number of women (including pregnant women) and people with chronic diseases among the refugees, the midwife's and gynaecologists' team had to be increased, and a second therapeutic team had to be sent off.



A medical centre at the tent part of the refugee camp in Radusha

In the different periods the following people took part in the mission: colonel Nikolay Bogdanov, MD, colonel Vesselin Velikov, MD, lieutenant colonel Petar Dinev, MD, major Moutafchiiski, MD, lieutenant colonel Roumen Farashev, MD, lieutenant colonel Lyubomir Palejko, MA in pharmacist, major Krassimir Ivanov, MD, major Guergi Popov, MD, major Plamen Stoyanov, MD, senior lieutenant Nikolov, MD, and other senior and lower personnel from Sofia Military Medical Academy.

The refugee camp in Radusha consisted of two parts – tents



A refugee camp in Radusha

with 3000 beds for refugees from Kosovo, and a hospital with 400 beds, opened up in temporary buildings for refugees from Bosnia. The distance between them was 1,5 km. The number of people ranged within 2200 – 3200 for the different periods. 7200 people passed through this refugee camp.

picture 58, p.84

In the beginning the brigade's staff was accommodated in tents next to the administrative buildings of an old mine, situated near the camp's hospital. Examinations were conducted in mobile consultancy rooms (especially adapted vans of the 'Zil' type – 131 trucks). After the repair work of the buildings, the personnel and the consultancy rooms were gradually moved there. Teams on duty were annually sent to the tent part of the camp by ambulance.

The work of the brigade's staff was characterised by a high level of tension. The average daily examinations per day were 80-100, which on certain peak days, when refugees were intensively



Providing help to a child from Kosovo



Memorial plaque in the village of Radusha, Macedonia

accommodated, reached up to 300 per 24 hours.

During the mission medical assistance was provided to the local community as well. There was a perfect interaction and co-ordination established with the Skopje military hospital and other medical centres, and with representatives of government and non-governmental organisations from other countries. The Republic of Bulgaria granted humanitarian aid in the form of medicaments, clothing, food supplies, tents, camp kitchens, etc.

The activity of the rear and medical logistic support corps ended on July 14, 1999 and its assistance was highly appreciated by the government of the Republic of Macedonia. A memorial plaque was placed in the village to commemorate the Bulgarian participation and indicate the gratitude of the people.

The minister of defence of the Republic of Bulgaria officially expressed his gratitude to the whole personnel for the perfect performance of the humanitarian mission. Several military doctors were awarded the medal „For loyal service under the flags“.

HUMANITARIAN MISSION TO THE REPUBLIC OF TURKEY

Early in the morning on August 17th, 1999 the Republic of Turkey was shaken by an earthquake of a magnitude of 6.7 by Richter's scale. On the basis of an order, issued by the Minister of defence of August 18th, the Military Medical Academy sent a team of highly-qualified specialists to provide urgent medical assistance to the casualties of the earthquake.



The team was headed by the commander-in-chief of the Military Medical Rapid Reaction Force colonel Alexander Dimitrov, MD and included 14 specialists: a co-ordinator, three surgeons, two anaesthesiologists, a gynaecologist, a paediatrician, a midwife, two surgery nurses, two reanimation nurses, and a nurse paediatrician. The team was provided with the medicaments, special products, blood and blood products. Dechko Papazov, MD gave valuable help in equipping the team.

The team included: colonel Zdravko Kirvikov, MD, lieutenant

colonel Stoyan Chupetlovski, MD, and the medical doctors from the Military Medical Academy Ivan Shopov, Guergi Kovatchev, Dimitar Zhelyzkov, Aneta Nacheva, etc.



Bulgarian officers from the Civil Defence in Adapazar

At about 3p.m. on August 19, 1999 the team arrived in one of the most severely affected towns – Adapazar. The team settled in the stadium and started work. Only on this site medical assistance was provided to twenty seriously injured people, of which six were children, and four pregnant women. For their short stay our military medical doctors managed to provide assistance to about 400 injured and granted the so indispensable in such mass-scale disasters blood and plasma to their colleagues from the local hospital.

The Military Medical Academy declared its willingness to provide assistance in the form of specialised epidemiological teams should there be an outburst of an epidemic. The Turkish

government, however, decided that there was no such danger, therefore our teams did not leave for Turkey.

Having successfully completed its mission, the team came back to Bulgaria on August 24, 1999.

PEACEKEEPING MISSION TO AFGHANISTAN

In implementing resolution No.1386 of December 20, 2001 of the UN Security Council, an international peacekeeping mission to help Afghanistan was held.

On February 8, 2002 the National Assembly passed a decision that Bulgaria take part in the mission to Afghanistan with a military contingent of up to forty representatives of the Bulgarian army.



By the order of the minister of defence, the Bulgarian army was assigned the task to set up a sanitary manipulation unit. The

Bulgarian contingent was to perform its duties as an integral part of the contingent of the United Kingdom and Northern Ireland. Head of the International Security and Assistance Forces (ISAF) was the British general John McKohl. A senior national officer representing our mission to Afghanistan was lieutenant colonel Milko Berner.

Training courses for our mission were held at the Mousachevo division for nuclear, chemical and biological protection of the population and the environment. On February 14th, 2002 the whole staff of 31 soldiers, and the necessary equipment, property and outfits were found to be up to the standard for the mission.

After completing the training course, the whole staff left for Kabul, the capital of Afghanistan, divided in two groups. The first group was given an official salute as it was sent off on February 18th, and the second group flew off on February 20th. The head of the Bulgarian squadron met the team in Kabul.

The Bulgarian camp settled in tents in the industrial area of Kabul, on the premises of what used to be a construction enterprise for road repair.



Discharging the equipment at the airport in Kabul



Construction of the Bulgarian camp near Kabul



The Bulgarian camp in Afghanistan



A Czech camp hospital in Kabul



A German vet testing at the Bulgarian camp in Kabul

A medical centre was opened in two tents, one of them equipped as a station, the other – as a warehouse for the storage of medical equipment.

The squadron was provided medical logistic support by captain Jordan Jordanov, MD, and Vassil Tzarev, together with the respective tools and a car-hospital with reanimation equipment. Whenever it was necessary, specialised and highly-qualified treatment was provided at the German camp hospital, opened up in Kabul to meet ISAF's needs; it was situated near the Bulgarian camp.

A Czech camp hospital was used for dental treatment; this hospital was established at the beginning of April 2002 and it was six kilometres away from the Bulgarian camp.

The Bulgarian medical staff took part in all events, organised



Bulgarian, English and Afghani medical doctors at a research conference in Kabul.

by the medical services of the German, Spanish, Czech, Portuguese, British, and Turkish contingents. The medical logistic support for the groups for mine disarming, detonation of unexploded

ammunition, gunnery training, convoys, and academic fora were taken up by these contingents.

The veterinary and medical logistic support was provided by the German contingent, whose veterinary surgeon was in charge of food and water sanitation control.

In August 2002, when a rotation of the Bulgarian contingent was effected, major Alexander Parashkevov, was appointed medical doctor. Upon his return in 2003, he was awarded the chest medal „For loyal service under the flags“, the fourth level by the minister of defence.

The mission of ISAF to Afghanistan is still working, the latest rotation in the Bulgarian contingent being effected on January 21st – 23rd, 2003; captain Alexander Marinov, MD, was sent medical doctor there.

Throughout the years separate Bulgarian medical doctors have worked in Angola, Ethiopia, Libya and other countries, however there is not sufficient information available.

EPILOGUE

Reading the chronicles of the humanitarian and peacekeeping operations, organised by Bulgaria, it would be quite difficult to imagine how, in the dawn of our modern history, when the state and its basic political, legislative and military institutions were being established, the still fragile military medical service of the Bulgarian army had the strength to disregard its internal problems and lend a helpful hand to the people, suffering war in the distant Manchuria (the Russian-Japanese war, 1904). Since then and up to the present, the history of the Bulgarian humanitarian missions has been marked by global and regional military conflicts, which shattered Europe, Africa, Asia and Latin America last century. It has also been accompanied by natural disasters, nearly as destructive as wars. The military doctors, with their military and medical experience, have played a key role in such missions. We can find them in different parts of the world, offering medical treatment to wounded and ill soldiers, helping casualties, and providing vital humanitarian aid to the vulnerable people all over the world.

In the course of time the idea for humanitarian aid has evolved from the concept to provide assistance in wartime (the Russian-Japanese, World Wars I and II) to the idea to maintain this activity after peace is reached, so that peacekeeping and peace enforcement is guaranteed in the post-war period (Korea, 1952-1956). Thus the Bulgarian military medical service missionaries have assumed the role of peacekeepers. They offer medical treatment to the ill, conduct training courses for the medical staff, participate in setting up local institutions and bodies, and contribute to maintaining peace.

Since the beginning of the 1950's to the present day, Bulgarian military medical doctors have been an integral of all humanitarian missions, organised by the Ministry of Defence, the Ministry of

Healthcare and the Red Cross (Algeria, Mozambique, Nicaragua, Syria, Lebanon).

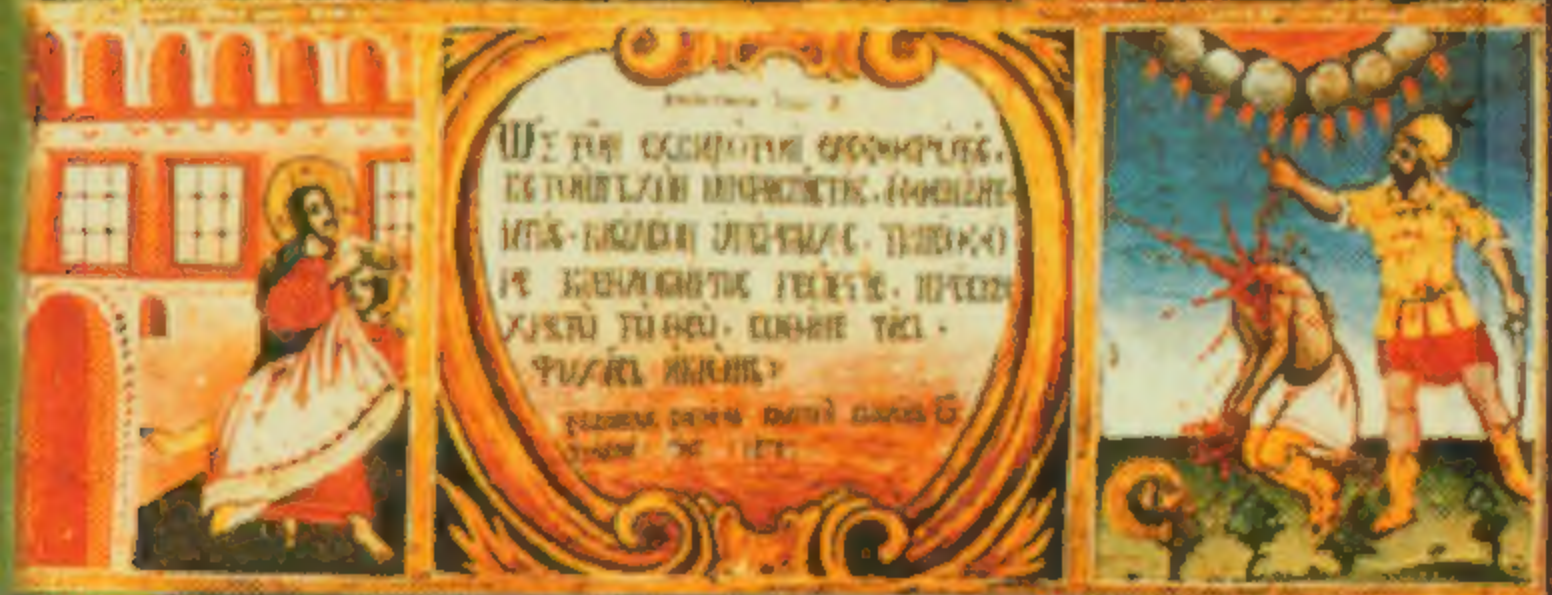
With their rich experience, the Bulgarian military medical doctors have been particularly suited to take part in the peacekeeping operations under the aegis of the UN throughout the last decade. Typical of these missions has been that military formations have participated in operations to keep peace, restore the institutions of the democratic state and its infrastructure, provide assistance to the population in the stricken areas. Although the medical logistic support is not the core of the multinational peacekeeping forces, it is an integral part of these forces. Bulgaria's declared strong determination to join NATO has created the favourable opportunity for it to take part in peacekeeping operations (Cambodia, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Kosovo, Afghanistan), which continue up to the present.

The Bulgarian spirit, responsive to the suffering of other people, cannot remain apathetic to the suffering, suddenly inflicted upon large groups of people as a result of natural disasters and social catastrophes, as a result of a mass-scale influx of refugees (Armenia, Turkey, Macedonia). The success of these operations can be largely attributed to the Rapid Reaction Corps, established at the Military Medical Academy. The experience of the past, and the achievements of the present, enables this corps to set off to the stricken area in a couple of hours, and provide the necessary humanitarian aid (including medical logistic support and provision of the necessary supplies – medication, water, food, clothing, property).

We are a small people, but have a well-developed sense of mutual help and self-sacrifice. Thus, throughout a whole century, Bulgarian soldiers in white have been doing their duty to mankind, some of them even losing their lives in this highly humane mission.

**100 MILITARY
MEDICAL MISSIONS**

Professor Stoyan Tonev, MD, PhD
Miroslava Kadurina, doctor



UNIVERSITY MEDICAL ACADEMY